NEW YORK CITY'S MILLION ACRE FARM IN NEW JERSEY

Picking time in a Monmouth county apple orchard.

Harvesting potatoes in Monmouth county, New Jersey.

Model poultry plant of New Jersey Agricultural College at New Brunswick.

Plan of the State to Reclaim Waste Land Enough to Feed Entire Metropolitan Area

NEW Jersey's official attempt to reduce the cost of living may seem to many to have been long delayed. However, few will dispute that there remains much to be accomplished in bringing the necessities of life within the means of the average citizen.

The Conservation Commission established by the State of New Jersey on July 1 has already announced its intention of using its powers and resources to influence lower prices for those commodities recognized by all housekeepers as daily necessities. And the new Conservation Commission of New Jersey does not plan to go to the courts or conduct long, tedious and expensive investigations to bring about these changes. The members are of one opinion: that New Jersey furnishes the natural means for the long sought relief from the high price evil. They plan to make of New Jersey a million acre garden from which more than ten million persons who make their homes on its borders may be provided with the products of the soil during the entire year.

By careful development and scientific cultivation it is believed that New York city's million acre garden may be within a decade equally as valuable to the inhabitants of Philadelphia, Baltimore and even Washington. In a single section of New Jersey there are more than a million acres from which practically nothing is produced. Seven counties, Ocean, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland and Cape May, have land areas totalling about 2,300,000 acres, of which about 40 per cent. is farm land. In this section alone there are more than a million acres of waste land whose nature and character show it to be highly productive and especially responsive to cultivation. In these seven counties, whose land area is practically equal to that of the State of Iowa, there are less than 600,000 acres of what is commonly characterized as improved land. Less than 30 per cent. of these 2,300,000 acres is given over to productive farming.

The pioneer gardener of this section of New Jersey must first solve the comparatively simple problem of converting many square miles of stunted oak and pine forests into fertile fields. He has many advantages to encourage him. The soil is a combination of sand, clay, gravel and marl —declared by agriculturists to be the very best for gardening purposes. So level are the broad expanses of waste land within these counties that there are few places where an elevation of more than eleven feet above sea level is recorded.

Prof. A. J. Rider, treasurer of the State Board of Agriculture, and Alfred Gaskill, head of the recently organized Conservation Commission, are convinced that all New Jersey needs to interest a half million new settlers in her million acre garden venture is publicity.

"It isn't the price of foods that is to blame for the high cost of living," said Mr. Gaskill. "It is sweltering nights, children on the streets, the father of the family bent over the bench for hours at a time. That is the trouble. And all the time more are consuming and fewer producing the wealth contained in our soils. We want to draw such men to our small towns and villages, where they can have an opportunity to produce something from the earth, and in this way to overcome, in a measure, the congestion of the cities.

"Tracing the high cost of living to its original sources points out in many instances lopsided development. This has been especially true in New Jersey. Other industries in the State have been stimulated, vigorously stimulated, while the pursuit of agriculture has not been encouraged. History shows that New Jersey has placed a premium on land and farm abandonment. But all that belongs to the past. We are going to teach Jerseymen, and others too, what is here and to what profit it can be used. All that is needed is to give to the public the truth about New Jersey."

Prof. Rider is none the less enthusiastic. At a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture Prof. Rider had the following to say: "I believe that corporate farming will reduce the cost of living. I believe that there are many men in New York city, for instance, who would rather be growing apples than cutting off coupons. Certainly they can grow apples in the sunshine under the blue skies and it is better to produce from the earth than to rob your Wall Street brother."

The possibilities of New Jersey providing a garden for ten million persons is perhaps best shown by a glance at her actual productive abilities already demonstrated. In the State of New Jersey there are in round numbers 37,000 farms, containing an average of 77 acres each; 33,000 of these and 90 per cent. of the farm land are in the lower part of central and south Jersey. Encroachments of cities and large and rapidly growing towns have reduced farm lands 267,109 acres in ten years. This alone is equivalent to the wiping out of 2,255 farms of the present size. The total value of all farm land in the State is estimated at $255,000,000, which is an increase of $66,000,000 during the past decade.

The total value of each farm has been averaged at $7,600, of which the land value amounts to about $6,500. While only a little more than 50 per cent. of the total land of the State is used for farming purposes, 85 per cent. of the land of Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset counties is turned over to the pursuit of agriculture.

But it is not upon deductions from these generalities that New Jersey experts to interest people in her garden project to supply the centre of the world's greatest consuming population. The inducements to settle in New Jersey are backed by advantages that are as definite as they are real. It is in the production of garden produce that figures show New Jersey to be without a rival.

Last year the total value of vegetables raised in the State exceeded fourteen million dollars, of which seven million dollars worth of potatoes formed the principal part. It is estimated that the present crop of sweet potatoes in New Jersey will be well over three and a half million bushels. From Monmouth county alone more than 2,000,000 bushels of potatoes have been shipped this fall to nearby markets for consumption. Practically all the other potatoes raised in the State come from the neighboring county of Salem. The three towns of Salem, Elmer and Woodstown made a combined record of 600 carloads for the season. Gloucester county this fall has sold more than 400,000 crates of tomatoes direct to the residents of Philadelphia.

It would be unfair to leave the subject of New Jersey's farming possibilities without mentioning the cranberry industry. Ten thousand acres in southern Jersey are used for producing cranberries for nearby markets. This year's crop has been estimated at about 250,000 barrels and its value will be little less than a million dollars.

The raising of cranberries is described as a particularly inviting industry. There remain in south Jersey thousands of acres that may be cleared at an average cost of $5 an acre. Unlike cranberry farms in other sections, New Jersey's rich marsh lands begin to bear the third year following planting. A profit paying crop is generally raised during the fifth year and the life of a New Jersey cranberry meadow properly cleared and set out is often more than thirty years. During all these years the expense of harvesting and marketing the crops is practically the only one after the original cost of clearing the marshes.

And while considering the subject of valuations it might be of interest to call attention to the fact that the raising of poultry is now being considered seriously by the big truck farmers in south Jersey. From figures compiled during the present summer it is asserted that poultry valuations in the State will exceed three millions of dollars. Especial attention is also being given to the cultivation of flowers, plants and nursery products and the surprising sum of three and a half million dollars is said to underrate their value throughout the State.

Another evidence of what New Jersey may attain in her garden ventures may be traced to a little town in Gloucester county on the banks of the Delaware River. Probably not more than a thousand persons of the ten million within easy reach of New Jersey's contemplated Million Acre Garden ever heard of Swedesboro. Yet it is the name of the heaviest shipping station for vegetables in the United States. What makes the importance of Swedesboro as a shipping station all the more significant is the fact that at the present time the big manufacturing cities right in New Jersey, together with its home towns and rapidly growing seashore resorts, furnish markets for a large percentage of the garden products of the State.

Exceptional Inducements Offered to Homeseekers---Fine Record Made by Cultivated Sections

The many different varieties of fruits and vegetables grown to advantage in New Jersey is another proof of the peculiar adaptability of its soil to garden purposes. The value of Hunterdon county's peach crop this season has been estimated at more than a million dollars. Other fruits add another million dollars to the value of State products.

Although there are 2,000,000 acres of improved land in New Jersey under cultivation less than 180,000 acres are used for strictly gardening purposes. Approximately 96,000 acres are producing potatoes and 88,000 acres are utilized for the raising of other garden produce. But it is from the results of the cultivation of these 180,000 acres that agricultural experts have planned the Million Acre Garden to provide for the most densely populated metropolitan section in America.

As New Jersey's State Forester Mr. Gaskill has proved he is a man of practical theories and his associates on the new Conservation Board have been appointed because of similar qualifications.

Mathematically at least plans for New Jersey's Million Acre Garden appear to be plausible. It is a matter of record that one acre of improved ground can be made to furnish fifteen persons with fruits and vegetables during the entire year. Converting New Jersey's million acre tract into a garden would mean then in other words enough fruit and vegetables during the entire twelve months not only for the ten millions of persons on the State's borders, but for the two and a half million who go to make up the present population of New Jersey itself. Add to this two and a half million another half million who because of business reasons and changed ideals find in the garden promotion plan an attractive proposition and the aggregate products allotted to a million acres will furnish an extra two millions annually.

The initial cost of farm land in New Jersey will hardly prove a barrier to the development of the garden scheme. The million acres of unused land in south Jersey from which the formation of the metropolitan garden is planned has a market value of little more than fifty dollars an acre. Being in close proximity to large centres of population labor is easily accessible. Seven-tenths of the total number of those who own farms in New Jersey hired labor during the past year and the average amount annually expended for hired help amounted to only $165 a farm.

But the advantages offered by the State to its garden pioneers are unique because they are exceptional. Changed conditions mean changed ideals and the very men who in youth turned their faces toward the city now remember the charms of the country. Improved conditions of transportation, quick and direct communication with the big centres of population, excellent schools and a healthy environment that appeals especially to the home maker removes hardships that the farmers of Western communities formerly were, and even yet are, forced to endure.

New Jersey's system of transportation is the very best in the United States. There are 2,500 miles of railroad lines and 4,000 miles of improved highways in the State. With the development of additional farming land will come the extension of railroads and public thoroughfares. With the realization of the plans to create a Million Acre Garden in New Jersey will come closer contact with those higher ideals of civilization peculiar to Americans and American institutions.

Wise, experienced, hardheaded business men are the foremost friends of the Million Acre Garden movement. The contentions of the favorers of the project have been scientifically by the findings incorporated in the reports of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture and Conservation Commission. Already these reports have convinced and converted many. There is every indication that New York city's Million Acre Garden in New Jersey will not be long delayed.

UNCLE SAM'S HEAD ANIMAL TRAINER TALKS ON BRUTE INTELLIGENCE

TWO lions fighting in their winter quarters at Bridgeport bent the bars of their cage out of shape. They had been separated and stood with lashing tails and half open mouths in opposite corners.

The keeper got tools and entered the cage to repair the damage, ordering William H. Blackburn, the nearest man in sight, to follow him. Blackburn was a Philadelphia boy and was learning the show business under P. T. Barnum.

"I trembled all over as I obeyed the order," Mr. Blackburn said in his narrative of the incident. "Lions and myself had never met before on so intimate a footing. Immediately I experienced what properly may be called a startling magnification vision. The man who unexpectedly sees a little black bear in the woods gives it afterward, as long as he lives, oxlike dimensions. Fishermen too exhibit the same optical idiosyncrasy.

"No, I would not call them liars, since that early event in my life as an animal trainer has given me a fellow feeling with all persons who under the shock of fear or excitement transform rabbits into wildcats and copperheads into boa constrictors. Those lions standing on all fours appeared to be ten feet high.

"Once a man wrote and asked how much I would give for a wolf that was three feet tall at the shoulders. He had seen the wolf and meant to trap him. I replied that I would pay $20 for a wolf that was two feet three inches at the shoulders and would allow a bonus of $10 for every inch above those figures. 'Send me the wolf,' I said, 'and I will mail you a check for $110.' So ended our correspondence."

Mr. Blackburn entered the lion's den at Bridgeport thirty-six years ago. From that time to this he has lived among the wild creatures of the earth. He is big, strong, alert and active and is as competent as ever to train lions, tigers and elephants. He is now the head animal keeper of the United States Government, being associated with the Smithsonian Institution and on daily duty at the National Zoological Park in Washington. Practically, if not theoretically, he has a better understanding of wild beasts than any other man in this country. He was assistant superintendent of Barnum's menagerie for many years and saw Jumbo killed by a freight train in Canada.

"The literature of the show," he said, "placed Jumbo's weight at ten tons, which, in my opinion, was about two tons above the right figure. Nevertheless he was the largest elephant ever captured by man, and besides was a kind, sensible old fellow.

"He tried to beat the train down the track and escape. I going ahead of him as fast as I could, but he was hit on the leg and doubled up, the engine and three cars being thrown into the ditch by the collision. He saw the headlight of the locomotive—we were loading the animals after nightfall—and was intelligent enough to know that he would be run over unless he got off the main line, but he couldn't find an opening between the cars standing on either side of the track."

For nearly a quarter of a century Mr. Blackburn has been the landlord, educator, physician and regulator of Uncle Sam's wild animal colony in Washington. More than 1,500 creatures from the woods and jungles are his boarders, pupils and patients.

Bread, made after his own recipe, is baked in the park for the bears, a 700 pound bear getting about eighteen pounds daily. There is a kitchen where vegetables are cooked for some of the other animals. Pigeons and chickens are raised for the large snakes.

"An anaconda," Mr. Blackburn said, "will eat about eleven chickens a year and will kill them more quickly than we can do the trick ourselves. The chicken will be caught by a lightning-like movement and a loop will be thrown around it instantly. In a moment it is dead.

"Physicians declare that a great many human beings die from overeating. A snake never does. He knows when he has had enough. The alleged wisdom of serpents may be based on their dietary practices. I have taken many live chickens out of cages containing big snakes, though the chickens had been walking around among the snakes for a day and a night. A lion or a tiger will eat from twelve to fourteen pounds of meat a day."

Also Mr. Blackburn is a wild animal doctor.

"Leopards, wolves, elephants and so on," he said, "can't be treated medically in the same manner as can horses and cows. Their sense of smell is so acute that they will detect medicine in their food and so we have to starve them and deprive them of water at times. I have developed my own list of remedies and might set up as a lion and tiger doctor if prospective patients were more numerous. I can likewise treat birds and snakes.

"Moose, caribou, the prong horned antelope, mountain sheep and goats and the Columbia black tailed deer, all native Americans, by the way, soon sicken and die when brought down from the high altitudes in which they are accustomed to live. Some animals, too, have strange appetites and fail in health if they can't get what they want. The reindeer in Alaska eat moss, in which there is little nourishment, and the leaves and young bark of willow trees, but they will not touch hay or grain. Experiments are now being made to teach young reindeer to eat oatmeal, but I am told the chances of success are not very promising."

For twelve seasons he took part in Barnum's street parades. He was asked if any of the animals with which he rode ever tried to devour him.

"Well," he replied, "all of them, I suppose, privately longed to sample me, and several of them tried to do so, but here I am, whole of limb and body, with only the scars of a few scratches accidentally or purposely inflicted. I have been in some tight corners, but man is a thinking machine and the odds are with him so long as he doesn't lose his head.

"My greatest scare occurred on that morning at Bridgeport, though in reality I was not in any danger. The next experience which caused my hair to stand up happened midway between two towns in northern New York. We showed in one of the towns and paraded in both. A terrific storm came up. The thunder boomed like whole batteries of artillery and the lightning filled the black sky with long, crooked streaks and flashes.

"My wagon companions were three healthy lions, one of which was uncommonly large and active. It had seemed that he had been eying me rather gluttonously all season. Often he would strike at me as he passed back and forth in the cage.

"On the day I am speaking about I wore, as usual, high boots, tights and plaid kilts. After a particularly loud crash of thunder the big lion ran right up to me and hid his head under my kilts. I hurriedly moved sidewise on my stool to get away, but the further I moved the harder he bored into me with his nose. My last hour had come, so I thought.

"I stood up, the head of the lion still under my Scottish skirts, and backed to the centre of the cage, where an iron partition was strapped to the roof. It was hours, it seemed to me, before I got the partition loose.

"In the meantime the lion's nose was hard against my stomach and he was breathing horribly, but not saying a word. Well, I escaped by a quick turn and slammed the partition down into the lion's face. The old fellow, trembling with terror, looked at me reproachfully and then began to roar.

"Lions are always dangerous, have men, as they do good days and bad days, exactly like human beings. But they are more to be trusted than are tigers. A lion that will stand up more resolutely than is one with a long line of zoological park ancestors. He is worn out by his journey in cramped quarters over land and water, and can't guess what is going to happen to him. The zoo lion, on the other hand, is well fed and sleek and has the arrogance which comes with luxury and idleness. Oh, there is a whole lot of human nature in animals, or a whole lot of animalism in human nature, if that is the way you prefer to look at it.

"About the handsomest lioness I ever saw belonged to W. W. Cole, the showman. He sold it to James A. Bailey, and word passed along between the cages that Cole had put one over on the old man. The beast, so the gossips related, was crazy; she'd eat any one up who got within grabbing distance.

"I gave her a corner in a wagon that contained two other lions. She would strike when she passed me and show her teeth, upper and lower. I knew at once that she had been abused. I could see her cringe every time she looked at my whip. Before the summer was over I was stroking her neck and back as she marched from one end of the cage to the other during our morning parade.

"Yes, the lion is the king among beasts in other ways than looks. I once put a big tiger in a cage with a lion, chaining the lion but giving him slack enough to stand up and turn around. It was the opening of the season in New York and we paraded in the streets from early in the evening until 11 o'clock at night. Red fire was burned on the top of my wagon and the animals became greatly excited. The tiger pounced on the lion, but I stopped the fight with the stool on which I was sitting. Later the battle was renewed, the lion knocking the tiger down five times. The lion, in my opinion, can whip anything that walks.

"Monkeys are the smartest of all animals; pouch animals are the stupidest. I taught a kangaroo the use of boxing gloves, but I never could break him of trying to kick me in the stomach or neck with his hind foot. Monkeys of the pouch variety are just as active and mischievous, however, as are the other members of their tribe.

"One of them got a brazil nut in his pouch and I had to lance his jaw and take the nut out. He pulled the stitches from the incision and then for several days showed off to his astonished friends by drawing long straws back and forth through the wound.

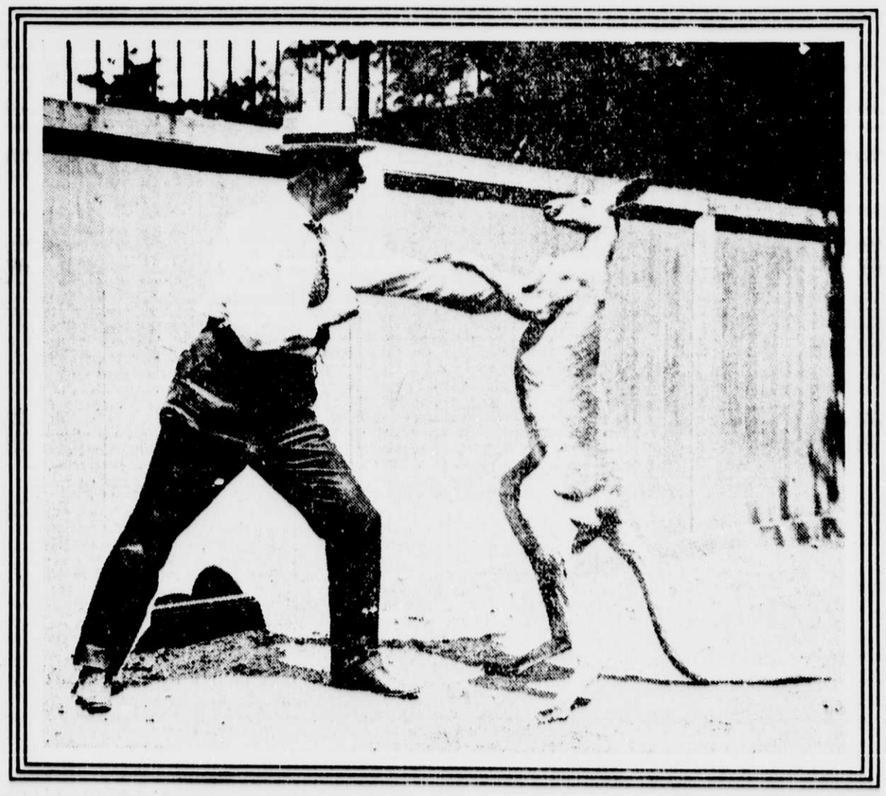
"Another monkey would get a piece of hay and use it to draw waterbugs out of the cracks in his cage. It required some thinking in advance to do such a thing as that, but the animal that thinks little and at best can't go very far. All moving and living creatures are governed by their instincts, first to protect themselves, second to get food for themselves and third to reproduce themselves. And there they stop.

"I don't humanize animals. I have lived too long among them to give them attributes they don't possess. They can't be raised up or uplifted in some good persons phrase. A leopard will always be a leopard. Centuries can't change him. A wild man, however, may be caught in the woods, taught to eat with a knife and fork and to read and write. His generations will constantly improve. The American Indian is an illustration in point. Many Indians have become artists, engineers and poets.

"The war in Europe has cut off the supply of animals coming from Africa and the Orient. Practically, the Germans have a monopoly of the business and Hamburg is the greatest of all wild animal markets. In normal times a fine black maned lion will sell for $1,000, an ordinary adult lion for $600 up to $750 and a lioness for $450. A two-year-old Bengal tiger is worth $750 and an adult $1,000.

"A good elephant, 8 or 10 years of age, will bring $2,500 and so will a hippopotamus. Giraffes were quoted early this year at $3,000. A double horned rhinoceros will sell readily for $5,000 and a single horned one for any price that may be asked but never for less than $7,500.

"I'll say this about animals," Mr. Blackburn observed at the end of the interview. "They know their friends. A dog, as every one understands, will instantly sense or smell the mark of a woman who is an enemy of the family. One of the 750 pound Kodiak bears always comes to the front of his enclosure when I am around and we shake hands with me. A certain lion, though eating his dinner will postpone his meal to put his paw, drawn in, through the bars and, using his arm and will gently stroke me from shoulder to wrist, his face aglow with affection."



Mr. Blackburn and his kangaroo boxing partner.